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'Oh yes, our sister company in Abidjan has sent a young African to train in a large brewery in France.'

'What is your labour like?'

'Not so good. They don't seem to have much interest in their work.'

I remembered my discussion with Babacar Saye, Mayor of St. Louis, who told me that though he was a Socialist, he believed that at the present time capitalism had an essential role in the country. 'If we are to improve the conditions of the proletariat capitalism is a necessity, but this improvement cannot be speeded up except to the extent that the profit from capital is used towards the satisfying of the indispensable needs of the workers. Therefore it is necessary that the worker feels that he is complementary to the capitalist—it is up to the capitalist to make him understand this.'

To me this seems one of the most important factors in the industrialization of West Africa. The African from the tribal background is essentially an individual with a distinct position in his tribal group or village. Though he appreciates the money he earns in industry, psychologically he does not like being treated as a mere cog in a machine, losing his identity. If he could be given some indication that he is as indispensable to the firm as the manager, he would work hard. As Mr. C. O. Van der Plas, the United Nations Official in the Gambia, once observed: 'It is curious that the African running his own little enterprise works literally like a black, and takes on enormous responsibilities.' Yet if he is taken on as a cog in a vast machine, he becomes slack and Europeans call him the most inefficient and expensive labour in the world. It seems to me that a lot depends on the relations between the worker and the managerial staff.

Two years before I had visited a large shoe factory in neighbouring Rufisque with Mr. David Pearson, the British Consul responsible for liaison between British and French territories in West Africa. The factory was sited on the outskirts of the town opposite a huge cement works which belched forth pastel smoke at an angry sky. We entered a courtyard where hides of every colour were lying in the sun to dry. A Czech employee of the firm, which has its origins in Czechoslovakia, met us and led us into a gloomy shed where flabby hides, a hideous grey green in

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S 295 887 colour, flopped on the floor like lumps of spittle. Others, like them, were being cured in evil vats or stripped in heavy mangles. I examined one of the skins stretched out on the floor. The Czech pointed to three large holes in its surface.

'They are not good, these skins. Very stiff. They come from the North Senegal and the Fula herdsmen will not learn that the cow must be looked after if you want to make good shoes from it. They are only good for cheap shoes. We have to get the better models from our European factories.'

We emerged from the foetid gloom of the curing section into the dyeing room, full of sheets of leather, which an African was busy spraying scarlet, yellow, grey or blue. Another was trimming the coloured hides before they were sent to dry.

S 295 [463] We followed our guide into a long hall, which reverberated to the rat-ti-tat of a hundred sewing machines, manned exclusively by Africans.

'Are most of your employees Africans?' I asked.

'On this work, yes. But not in the executive. And on some of the more skilled jobs we have to have Europeans.'

'Are they good workers?'

'Very good, though they cannot tackle the more difficult jobs. I believe they are better farther down the Coast. But we have nothing to complain about.'

And from the rate those shoes were coming off the production line, I was sure they hadn't.

'How many shoes do you produce a year?'

'About 300,000. Most of them are sandals,' he said, pointing to some scarlet slippers which an African was packing into boxes.

'These we also produce in great quantities.'

S W [291] He showed me a pink, green and sky blue slipper with a large plastic pompom where the big toe would be. These were wildly popular with the fashion-mad Jollof women at the time. Bata's are very much at the mercy of their whims, though they have the consolation that supply rarely exceeds demand.

S [294] [565] As I watched one African youth deftly turning a leather sandal on a stitching machine, I could not help thinking of the old Mandinka leather-worker in Dakar's market, laboriously sewing tough slippers as his father had done before him and as he was bound to do by virtue of his caste. Once he exercised a monopoly

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for no-one would undertake his work unless he belonged to that caste. But the laws of supply and demand do not respect hereditary caste-rights. Mass-production and cheaper shoes dictate the old leather-worker's redundance. Soon he will fade into the obscurity of a rural industry, a supplier of goods for the local arts and crafts store.

This was nowhere more evident than in Dakar which has a large number of factories. Here one can see the new Africa rising up. The young negro comes from the bush, illiterate and half naked, living much as his ancestors before him. Soon he is caught up in the revolution. At first his house may be a small wooden shed, shared with members of his family or tribe on whom he is sponging. But soon he may earn thirteen pounds a month as an unskilled labourer, so that he can afford to take rooms with one of his richer brothers, whose weekly pay packet as a cook is six pounds. And so in Dakar people of all tribes meet in the great metropolis, live next to each other in the crowded Medina, and help to create a new town-life as different from that of the bush as city life in nineteenth-century industrial England was from that of the countryside.

In Dakar I met Diop, a young Jollof, well-educated, but out of work. I asked him how he lived and he told me that he just went from relation to relation each day borrowing money. He had had a job before, but after a quarrel with his employer, an African lawyer, he had had to leave. Each morning he left his wife, pretending to go to work. He deceived her into thinking he still had his job, by bringing home money lent him by relations. He 'borrowed' the equivalent of ten shillings from me, and to my astonishment promptly asked me to lunch the next day. His house, or rather room, was made of wood. Inside, the walls and the floor were covered with a gaily patterned lino. A large double bed and a small divan provided seats. A chest of drawers hung with all the crockery was the only other piece of furniture. On the walls was a large array of photos of friends and relations, all slightly over-exposed to give the effect of a lighter skin. Diop's wife, a ravishing, beautiful girl of nineteen, had spent all morning preparing Jollof rice for us, consisting of rice done in a sort of tomato purée, to which a delicious white fish with a variety of vegetables and a hot pepper sauce were added. A bottle of wine was produced for